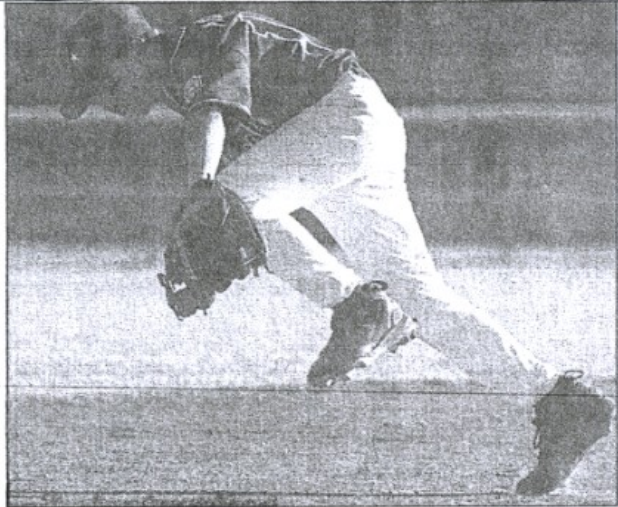




Hillsborough pitcher Grant Goodman throws out a Foster City runner in Friday's first game. — Brian Frank/Special to The Examiner



A ball squeeks past Hillsborough shortstop Austin Marcus Friday. Marks was the winning pitcher in Saturday's title-clincher. — Brian Frank/Special to The Examiner



Foster City second baseman Freddie Whitman, above, celebrates Friday as his team lives to see another day. Hillsborough's Henry Caruso, left, slides between the legs of Foster City catcher Christian Santos to score a run in the first inning of the game, won by 7-2 by Foster City. — Brian Frank/Special to The Examiner



Pitcher Brock Cozad also hit .435 for Hillsborough during its' District 52 title-winning run. — Brian Frank/Special to The Examiner

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Hillsborough climbs to the mountaintop again

9-and-10 year-olds repeat as District 52 champions

SAN MATEO — If Hillsborough's first postseason loss served as a wakeup call, the players on the hard-hitting 9-and-10 year-old all-star team got up ready to mash.

Hillsborough commanded a 13-0 win Saturday over Foster City to capture the District 52 championship for the second-consecutive year. Advancing through the winner's bracket, Hillsborough needed to be defeated twice by Foster City in the final round to be defeated.

Foster City came out swinging, taking the Friday night opener 7-2 to level the playing field. In the Saturday morning rematch, however, it was all Hillsborough.

"I think we got too cocky [Friday]

night," Hillsborough third baseman Grant Goodman said. "We should have won that game."

Every hitter at the top of the Hillsborough batting order contributed loud contact in the top of the first in Saturday's rematch.

The game began frighteningly enough when leadoff man Henry Caruso smoked a liner that seemed to strike Foster City starting pitcher Conner Stahl square in the chest. Stahl exhibited some catlike reflexes though, which saved him from certain injury. The lefty managed to get a glove on the ball, and while he did fall to the turf as Caruso sprinted to first for an infield single, Stahl recuperated and was standing on the mound asking for the ball back before the play was completed.

"I've seen my brother [pitch] and that has happened to him a bunch

of times," Stahl said. "It made me mad. I wanted to strike [the next batter] out."

The Hillsborough bats didn't let the southpaw off the hook, however. Goodman promptly got his team on the board with a booming homer to left, before two more runs crossed the plate in the first to give Hillsborough a 4-0 lead.

"We knew it was over at that point," Hillsborough No. 2 hitter Brock Cozad said. "That pretty much set the tone."

Before Hillsborough put the game out of reach with an eight-run explosion in the second inning, though, Foster City countered with an immediate comeback threat. The first three Foster City hitters reached base, prompting catcher Frankie Ferrari to job to the mound for a quick meeting with starting pitcher Austin Marcus.

"I was talking to him and giving him some words of confidence because he got a little down," Ferrari said. "I told him 'We'll get out of this. You'll be fine.'"

Marcus responded by demonstrating the brilliance that has made him the ace of the Hillsborough staff. He swiftly jumped ahead of Foster City's cleanup hitter 0-2, and fearlessly challenged him with great precision on the outside corner. With a 1-2 fastball, Marcus produced a 1-2-3 double play on a comeback grounder to keep his shutout in tact.

"He has such outstanding command," Hillsborough manager Jeff Cozad said. "It's unusual to see a kid at this age...move the ball around and hit spots so well."

The Hillsborough lineup exploded in an eight-run second inning, in which the first eight bat-

ters — Chris Mark, Caruso, Cozad, Goodman, Ferrari, Marcus, Will Reilly and Gordon Barrows — all reached base and eventually scored. Hillsborough produced 10 hits throughout the four inning game (10-run rule), and hit for a team batting average of .411 throughout the District 52 tourney.

With the win, Hillsborough advances to sectional play, which begins Thursday at Lakeshore Park against the winner of the District 45 tournament.

Throughout the District 52 tournament, Marcus posted a 4-0 record in six games, including a July 10 no-hitter against Palo Alto National. Hillsborough's top hitters were: Barrows, .625; Ferrari, .571; Garrett Schubiner, .571; Marcus, .471; Goodman, .450; Cozad, .435; and Caruso, .417.

— Special to The Examiner